Principle FIVE P5

Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre

November 2026

Centenary of the election of the first Labour administration: Sheffield November 1926

Sheffield was the first great Municipal Borough in the provinces to return a Labour majority. It was served by a Labour Council for six years.

It was a socialist council, believing in the principle collective effort, extending the operation of direct labour to all of the public services, even establishing a Municipal Printing Works – Sheffield people working to provide the facilities and services for Sheffield people – no middlemen.

In the six years between 1926 and 1932 a great deal was achieved, and all of this was recorded in an excellent pamphlet produced by the Sheffield City Labour Group in 1932, and written by the Labour Group Leader, Ernest Rowlinson. This will be of interest to all who care about Sheffield and who want to get an insight into the issues around local politics of the time, and pointers for the future.

It was for this reason that in 1982, the Sheffield Women's Printing Co-operative, on Matilda Street,

re-produced this publication. In 2023, it was published again by Principle 5 and to celebrate the centenary we have brought out a special edition which is of a much better quality than the previous editions, with high resolution photographs. We are fortunate to have a good co-operative printer, **Footprint**, who always give an excellent service.

The pamphlets are now available at £5.00 each. You can pick up a copy from the Principle 5 resource centre, or from any of these shops:
La Biblioteka, The Famous Sheffield Shop,
Next Chapter, Rhyme & Reason

or by post.

For those who would like to gain a clearer understanding of these crucial times, there could be no better book than **The History of the City of Sheffield 1843 – 1993. Vol. I: Politics**. Available to borrow from the Principle 5 Library.

We will be organising a special event where the issues raised by the experiences of 1926 can be addressed. Look out for more news.

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Gerrard Winstanley

September 2026 marked the 350th anniversary of the death of Gerrard Winstanley, a man who lived his beliefs and is a forerunner of those who sought to

establish a co-operative way of life. The root of the misery and suffering endured by the poor and oppressed people of England lay not in their being excluded from the political process, he maintained, but in the system that allowed the rich and powerful to enclose land and keep them from its benefits.

He lived at the time when the Monarchy, the Lords and the Bishops had been abolished and argued that Parliament must seize the opportunity to dismantle the whole inequitable system of private land-ownership over which the king had presided and restore the land to its rightful owners, the people.

Winstanley and his comrades were known as ‘The Diggers’ because as a community they worked on common land to produce food and share the harvest. This he established on St George’s Hill in Surrey on the 1st April 1649. This and successive endeavours were met with opposition, and these communes eventually failed. But the writings of Winstanley remain, some of which we have in the Principle 5 Library:

A Common Treasury

The Levellers and the English Revolution

Brailsford, H. N.

A film was made in 1976 ‘Winstanley’ An authentic historical drama about the visionary Gerrard Winstanley who led a group of impoverished 'Diggers' to assert their common rights.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winstanley_(film)

Chris Olewicz writing in the Autumn 2026 edition of the Journal of Co-operative Studies asks

What shall be the mechanism?

The coming co-operative commonwealth in utopian literature

Between 1890 and 1910, a small number of utopian novelists from the United States posed a question: under what circumstances might a socio-economic system based upon co-operation supplant a competitive one? This article examines seven novels that describe such a transformation and the conditions that gave rise to co-operative institutions. Although none fully confront the obstacles that must feel insurmountable beyond the confines of the page, the imaginings of the authors remain relevant at a time when technology-enabled economic disruption gives renewed potency to the co-operative ideal.

You can read the paper **HERE**

And the full Autumn Journal **HERE**

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A date for your diary

Principle 5 AGM

20th January 2027

2:00pm

Aizlewood's Mill Boardroom

Principle 5 Members and visitors are always welcome to book an appointment to come to the library.

We look forward to seeing you.

steve@sheffield.coop

Tel: 0114 282 3132

www.principle5.coop

Principle 5 Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre

Aizlewood's Mill, Nursery Street, Sheffield, S3 8GG